

BETHLEHEM STEEL COMPANY SHIPYARD, PLATE SHOP  
(W. & A. Fletcher Company)  
1201-1321 Hudson Street  
City of Hoboken  
Hudson County  
New Jersey

HAER No. NJ-95-E

HAER  
NJ  
9-HOBO,  
8E-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service

Northeast Region  
Philadelphia Support Office

U.S. Custom House

200 Chestnut Street

Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

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# HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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HAER No. NJ-95-E

Location: 1201-1321 Hudson Street  
City of Hoboken  
Hudson County, New Jersey

UTM: 18.582400.4511450  
Quad: Weehawken, N.J.-N.Y., 1:24,000

Dates of Construction: 1944

Present Owner: Shipyard Associates, L.P.  
5 Marine View Plaza, Suite 500  
Hoboken, New Jersey 07030

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Plate Shop is sited to the east of the Machine Shop within the Bethlehem Steel Company Shipyard complex. This large building was erected in 1944 as part of the Bethlehem Steel Company's program of expansion during the Second World War. This structure housed heavy metal-working activities until the closing of the yard in 1984.

Project Information: The Plate Shop is to be demolished as part of the planned redevelopment of the property.

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### History of the Bethlehem Steel Company Shipyard Plate Shop

The Plate Shop was erected during the Bethlehem Steel Company Shipbuilding Division's expansion of the Hoboken Yard and was completed in 1944 (see Photograph of Sanborn Map Company map of 1944 in Overview Section). The large, two-section interior space within this massive building provided an extensive working floor for the yard's heavy metalworking activities. Large overhead cranes allowed for the movement of heavy plate and beam stock throughout the entire building. In 1970 the shop was shown to be divided into a number of discreet work areas (see Photograph of Hoboken Yard Plate Shop Ground Floor Plan of 1970 and Photograph of Hoboken Yard Plate Shop Mold Loft Floor Plan and Sections of 1970). The forging area was located in the western end of the southern section of the building and was associated with the long, narrow beam and angle furnace and the larger plate furnace that were sited here. The eastern half of this section of the building was utilized as a large, open welding floor, while a smaller area between the forging and welding areas provided space for a number of metalworking machines.

Most of the shop's heavy metalworking machinery was located within the northern section of the building, although a small area at the western end was reserved for the storage and layout of plates. The north wall of this section of the building was lined with a series of offices, shops, and locker rooms. A high second story loft space was built above the eastern end of the northern section to house a small wood shop and serve a storage area for molds. The plate shop and its small mold loft both remained active in their original uses until the closing of the yard in 1984 (see Photograph of Hoboken Yard General Plan map of 1983 in Overview Section).

### Description of the Bethlehem Steel Company Shipyard Plate Shop

The Plate Shop is a large 2-story, 2-section, brick and steel building that is rectangular in plan, measuring approximately 380 feet by 150 feet and occupying a total area of 6,970 square feet. This massive building is located to the east of the Machine Shop between the Blacksmith Shop/Boiler Shop and the Carpenter Shop, and is capped by a paired gable roof. Skylights at the apex of each gable flank continuous ridge vents in the peak and extend along the entire length of the roof to illuminate an open, two-story interior space. The eastern end of the northern section of the building has been extended to a greater height to provide space for the mold loft, which is nearly 40 feet above the working floor below.

The eastern elevation is dominated by large entrances at the ground floors of both section (the entry to the northern section has been partially blocked) (see Photograph). Banks of characteristic metal tilt sash windows are located above these doors within the steel-frame portions of the building. The southern elevation exhibits banks of windows at the first and second story levels and paired ground floor entries near the furnace extension at the western end (see Photographs). The western elevation exhibits windows and a single door at the ground floor and a bank of windows at the second story level (see Photograph). The northern elevation exhibits a single story, shed-roofed extension along its entire length that housed offices, locker rooms, and storage areas (see Photograph). Banks of windows run along this extension and along the main building at the second story level. An exterior stair tower attached to the eastern part of this elevation provides access to the mold loft.

The large, two-section interior space within the Plate Shop is topped by a roof supported on regularly-placed steel posts and a steel truss (see Photographs). The massive overhead cranes that formerly served this building have been removed. Within the southern section of the shop the former welding area at the eastern end exhibits a steel channel floor, while the former forging area at the western end exhibits a recessed floor area with bending blocks for working with angle stock (see Photograph). The former beam and angle furnace and the plate furnace remain, but the structure that extended from the west end of the south elevation to house the furnaces has been removed. The northern section of the building, which was formerly floored with wood block, now exhibits a concrete floor. Only two of the massive metalworking machines that formerly occupied this section of the shop remain: a Whiting Joggling Machine installed in 1944 (originally owned by the United States Navy) and a Williams White & Company Gap Punch installed in 1957. The mold loft, located far above the working floor at the eastern end of the northern section of the building, is a large, open area with a wood floor with light provided by a skylight and windows in the north and south walls (see Photograph).

Sources of Information/Bibliography

Engineering Drawings

"Hoboken Yard General Plan." Hoboken: Hoboken Shipyards, Inc., 1983.

"Hoboken Yard Plate Shop Ground Floor Plan." Hoboken: Bethlehem Steel Company Shipbuilding Division, 1970.

"Hoboken Yard Plate Shop Mold Loft Floor Plan and Sections." Hoboken: Bethlehem Steel Company Shipbuilding Division, 1970.

Historic Views

Sanborn Map Company. *Hoboken Yard in the City of Hoboken*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1944.

Sanborn Map Company. *Insurance Maps of Hudson County - Hoboken*. Vol. 7. Corrected to 1938.

Primary and Unpublished Sources

Bethlehem Steel Company File. Bethlehem Public Library, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

W. & A. Fletcher Collection. South Street Seaport Museum, New York, New York.